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FORD SAYS OPEN MINING OF NICARAGUAN HARBOR MIGHT HAVE BEEN BE
BY SUSAN WARREN
LEXINGTON, KY

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Former President Gerald Ford said Friday the controversial mining of a Nicaraguan harbor possibly should have been done overtly rather than covertly.

The former president spoke at a symposium during which he answered questions from some of the more than 1,000 high school students at the University of Kentucky's Center for the Arts.

Ford received a \$7,500 speaker's fee for his appearance, which was sponsored by Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government and the state thoroughbred industry.

Ford said he wasn't in a position to know whether the harbor mining was proper, but indicated he was inclined to think so.

The mining sparked controversy in the U.S. Congress when it was disclosed it had been authorized by the Central Intelligence Agency, much to the surprise of some senators and representatives.

Ford said the country must do "whatever has to be be done to prevent Nicaragua from undercutting free elections in El Salvador."

"Maybe it should have been done overtly rather than covertly," Ford said of the mining.

He told students he wasn't aware of Central America's location until after he was out of law school and in the army, but reminded them Nicaragua and El Salvador are "due south of Chicago and not very far away."

"It would be unfortunate from our point of view to have them under the influence of Castro," Ford said.

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EXCERPTED